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ABSTRACT

The Ayurvedic Institute, which has been licensed as a private institution of higher education in New Mexico since 1994, offers training in the traditional therapy of East Indian Ayurveda, which includes the use of herbs, nutrition, panchakarma cleansing, and accupressure massage. The institute also offers training in the related disciplines of Ayurveda: Sanskrit, Yoga, and Jyotish (Vedic astrology). The institute's Ayurvedic studies program, which is the foundation of all its educational programs, consists of three academic courses: "Introduction to Philosophy and Theory of Ayurveda," "Introduction to Clinical Assessment," and "Introduction to Management of Disorders." Together, these courses entail approximately 700 hours of classroom instruction over 1 academic year and culminate in a certification of program completion. The courses are based on the Vedic educational model, which is based on using the self and a complete understanding of the self to transfer knowledge from teacher to student and which involves the use of practical examples, ceremonies, and stories. According to the institute's assessment criteria, which are described as a "blend of approximately 50% quantitative and 50% qualitative program analysis," its programs are successful in helping students who want to reach the goal of making Ayurveda a way of life. (Contains 10 references.) (MN)

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A Review and Analysis of the Ayurvedic Institute's

Ayurvedic Studies Program

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सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ।
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om, May we, teacher and student, be protected together
May we enjoy the fruits of our actions together
May we achieve strength together
May our knowledge be full of light
May we never have bitterness for one another.
Om Peace Peace Peace
(The Institute, 1999).

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"Ayurveda is beyond beginning and ending. A science of eternal healing, it is compared to a vast ocean, and studying Ayurveda to swimming across. A true teacher can teach one how to swim, but the swimming is up to the student; ... it is a lifelong journey."

-Charaka Samhita, Sutrasthana, Chapter Thirty

Brief description of the Institute and Program

According to materials prepared by the Ayurvedic Institute (1999), it is "recognized as one of the leading Ayurveda schools and Ayurvedic health spas outside of India." It was established in 1984 to "teach and provide the traditional therapy of East Indian Ayurveda including herbs, nutrition, panchakarma cleansing, and acupressure massage. The Institute also offers programs in the related disciplines of Ayurveda: Sanskrit, Yoga and Jyotish (Vedic astrology).

The Ayurvedic Studies Program is the foundation of the educational programs offered at the Institute. The program consists of three academic terms: Introduction to Philosophy and Theory of Ayurveda which takes place every fall quarter; Introduction to Clinical Assessment (winter quarter); and Introduction to Management of Disorders (spring quarter). Upon completion of the program, a certificate of completion is awarded. This completes the first academic year and is approximately 700 classroom hours. It is important to note here that the classroom hours are *approximately* 700 hours of classroom study. No absolutes are given, but only approximations as the number of hours of classroom study are not as important within the Vedic model of

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education as is what is learned and taught by both teacher and student. The Vedic model will be discussed later.

Rationale for choosing the program

As a child, I grew up with parents who always encouraged experimentation and believed that learning took place through experience. My mother was a very close friend of a Hindu woman and through her family, I was able to experience many facets of the Hindu culture such as food preparation, interpersonal communication, and traditional Hindu dress. In addition, through art, I was exposed to many various forms of artistic expression, especially that of Asian and Native American art. I remember workshops at children's museums where Native American forms of art were taught, thus exposing me to gain an appreciation for other cultures.

Upon entering college, this childhood exposure lead me wanting to experience more about Hinduism; however, I only felt comfortable experiencing it through readings. Readings of spiritual texts such as the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita, and the Contemporary Hindu Catechism, led to my desire to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the ancient Indian healing tradition of medicine called Ayurveda.

Major questions

The major questions asked while reviewing the Institute's Ayurvedic Studies program were: What is Ayurveda? What is the Vedic model of education? How does this eastern form of Vedic education in Ayurvedic Studies accomplish its goals? and What is the interaction between teacher and student in the Vedic model of education with respect to Ayurvedic Studies?

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Methodology

The Ayurvedic Institute authors a web site at http://www.ayurveda.com that contains a wealth of information about their programs and products. Included is information about:

- Ayurveda,
- accreditation and recognition of the Institute,
- a listing of core faculty, admission, registration and academic regulation information,
- and departmental information which contains the Educational, Herb, Pancha Karma, Publishing, Yoga, and Sanskrit departments.

Additionally, I sought licensure information from the New Mexico State Commission on Higher Education. According to Carrie Cole at the Commission (1999), the Ayurvedic Institute began offering classes in 1984 and has been licensed as a private institution of higher education in the state of New Mexico. Since 1994, the Institute has continuously received annual licensure renewal from the commission. The Institute's licensure is regulated by the New Mexico state regulation (now known as the Administrative Code) 5 NMAC 100.2 et. seq. which states:

> The Post-Secondary Educational Institution ... authorizes the New Mexico Commission on Higher Education ("Commission") to establish and monitor guidelines for the licensure of all private postsecondary institutions operating in New Mexico.
>
> The purpose of 5 NMAC 100.2 is to guide implementation of the Post-Secondary Educational Institution Act by defining clear expectations of institutions operating in the state while recognizing the varied purposes and clienteles of those institutions. It is the intent of the New Mexico Commission on Higher Education to encourage sound institutional

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> practices that result in high quality educational programs and expand the array of educational options available to New Mexico's citizens. (1999)

Ms. Cole also mentioned that the Institute both locally and through its distance education program annually enrolls 300-500 students.

Barbara Cook (1999), the Institute's registrar responded to the following questions via email correspondence regarding the Ayurvedic Studies program:

1. Who is the focus of the goal statements, the student or the teacher?
2. How much commitment to students is evidenced by the program's goal statement? For example, "Students will learn ..." or "Students will have the opportunity to learn ..."
3. Generally, goals can be divided into three primary domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Sometimes a social-interpersonal domain is added. Where do the program goals fall?
4. Do the goal statements have a past, present, or future orientation?

Ms. Cook also provided answers and suggestions to various other questions relating to student experiences via email correspondence.

The Institute's Academic Catalog was reviewed. Web sites such as that of the Institute and online Hindu texts such as the Bhagavad-Gita were reviewed to gain insight to the culture and nature of Ayurveda.

What is Ayurveda?

Ayurveda is derived from the Sanskrit word roots "ayus" and "vid" meaning life and knowledge respectfully. Ayus represents a combination of the body, sense organs, mind and soul, therefore Ayurveda means "knowledge concerning the maintenance of

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life" (Warrier & Gunawant, 1997). The basic tenets of this form of holistic medicine aims to hinder illness and to equalize mind, body and spirit. Actually, the relationship to western medicine would be that of the allopathic forms of health maintenance and preventive medicine but in a more holistic, naturapathic form.

What is the Vedic model of education?

The Vedic educational model is quite different from the "western" experience with which most of us are familiar. Simply put, "the knowledge is taught with the body, mind and spiritual components intact, along with practical examples, ceremonies and stories." (Cook, 1999)

Ayurveda and its relation to Indian philosophy is derived from the Vedas, the divine Hindu books of knowledge (Warrier & Gunawant, 1997). It is important to understand that in the religious context of Hinduism a combination of religious texts or scriptures are used in worship. Hindu sacred texts are broken into two areas: Vedas and Upanishads. As pointed out earlier, the term "Veda" means knowledge while the word "Upanishad" means "sitting down near to". There are four Vedas: *Rig, Sama, Yajur*, and *Atharva*. Many Upanishads exist with the most popular being the *Mahabarata*, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and the *Ramayana* but many Hindu scholars agree that there are about thirteen Upanishads that are the most important. (Fowler, 1997)

Ayurveda's relationship to scriptural texts is with the fourth Vedic text known as the *Atharva Veda*. This Veda "includes detailed dissertations upon the treatment of the sick using mantras, herbs, and potions" (Warrier & Gunawant, 1997). The system of

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Ayurvedic medicine is described in detail in the most popular of all Ayurvedic texts, the *Charaka Samhita.*

In the Vedic education model, which would pertain to the Vedas and not the Upanishads, the self is focal point of all knowledge and being.

> "Vedic Education is the means to enliven the total knowledge of Natural Law in the consciousness, Atma, the Self of everyone -- raising the quality of individual intelligence to Cosmic Intelligence, so that everyone always spontaneously lives daily life in accord with the total creative intelligence of Natural Law -- life always spontaneously upheld in the direction of evolution." (Maharishi Vedic University, 1996.)

Education begins with a concentration on an understanding of the self for without that understanding no learning can take place. Although the upanishadic texts make similar correlations to the self and education and self-learning, the overall condition of self-awareness and definition must be first accepted by the self before learning and understanding can take place. From this self-understanding, trust is exposed which allows the teacher and his or her knowledge to be taken seriously and with complete trust from the student.

The goal of Vedic education is to use the self and a complete understanding of the self to transfer knowledge from teacher to student. From the scriptural text perspective, "to realize that the true self is not really engaged in action, to begin with, and that science and technology (and the worlds formed by them) exist merely at the phenomenal level, and therefore have no transcendental effect on becoming or ultimate fate of the self. To achieve this realization is a goal that must pervade every level and sphere of education." (Götz, 1995)

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The Vedic education model as it pertains to Ayurveda would clearly support this statement in that the science of life cannot exist without the self or an understanding of the self relating to all learning and knowledge models. If one rejects the self, then one rejects Ayurveda. Similarly, if the self is not understood, Ayurveda cannot be taught or learned.

Goals and Objectives

Due to the cosmic nature of the Vedic educational model, goals and objectives may not necessarily be written, but only brought forth during the developing relationship between the student and teacher interaction. Therefore, only vague statements about the goals of the program are expressed in writing. The purpose of writing goals for a program in Ayurvedic Studies would be to westernize the educational process of an Eastern-based Vedic education model. Goals of the Institute as a whole are expressed by the Institute's director, Dr. Vasant Lad:

> It is the dream of Dr. Vasant Lad ... and the goal of the Ayurvedic Institute to offer a complete program of Ayurvedic study including a Master's Degree supported by our experienced and distinguished faculty combined with the opportunity for advanced clinical work in India. This full-fledged program would be a way that one can study Ayurvedically, this is to make Ayurveda a way of life. (Cook, 1999)

Therefore, the goal of the Ayurvedic Studies program is to make Ayurveda a way of life.

How does this eastern form of Vedic education in Ayurvedic Studies accomplish its goals?

The Ayurvedic programs reflect the style of sitting with a traditional Indian teacher which I term a combined "Upanishadic" and Vedic model of education. In the

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traditional Vedic model, the "goal statement" is determined by the teacher and may or may not be communicated to the student. The student's goal is just to find the right teacher. So, after carefully examining and choosing a teacher, the student is expected to then fully trust the teacher as to what is taught, how it is taught, and what the final outcome will be. It is taken for granted after the initial search and testing process, (which is pursued by both parties) that the teacher knows what to do and how to do it and has the student's best interests in mind.

Completely trusting the teacher to know what is best for the student is not ideal for most westerners. The western educational model lies mostly within a cognitive taxonomy with remembering, understanding, application, analysis, evaluation and creation of knowledge being the basis for teaching and learning. The Vedic model relies heavily on a social-interpersonal taxonomy where self-awareness, socialization, and the altruistic components of knowledge are emphasized. Since most Americans have been taught using the western approach to education it is difficult for them to transcend to the Vedic model. So, in the first year Ayurvedic Studies program the Institute sticks to the spirit of the Vedic model, in that Dr. Lad is the most influential "vote" in determining what is taught. This approach helps to ease students not used to the eastern style of education into the Vedic model. A set curriculum does exist that has largely been developed by many students' needs and desires over the years and is therefore constantly changing.

Dr. Lad determines the overall general goals and to some extent, the students do have a say in what is taught. The Gurukula (advanced Ayurveda studies program) is

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more traditional. Students are expected to let Dr. Lad teach what he wants and how he wants within the parameters of "Ayurvedic science," which is vast enough to incorporate many different teachings and styles. No curriculum is planned for this program. Dr. Lad can teach anything he wants (in the realm of Ayurveda) from day to day based on what he feels would benefit the students at that particular moment. Students are encouraged to enter this program with the purpose of spending more time with the teacher in a smaller more intimate setting, rather than gaining any particular pieces of knowledge even though the knowledge presented is quite advanced. Dr. Lad determines the goals in that program to a much greater extent. Though student input is not discouraged in this program, an obligation on the part of the Institute and its instructors to accept it is not as high as it is in the first year program.

The commitment made to a student in the Vedic model as it is still practiced in certain rare teacher-student relationships is such that the teacher would do anything to insure that the knowledge is passed on to the student. There are no limits to the commitments made between a sincere dedicated student and his or her destined teacher. Old Vedic texts say that the teacher will incarnate again and again in order to bring the student to the goal, and that a student will find his teacher again and again, lifetime after lifetime until the goal is met. The teacher is totally and completely committed to the student's education and overall well being. This is somewhat like the old western monk/elder relationship. Very simply put, the commitment to the students is that "we will do our best to create an environment where they can not only learn as much Ayurveda as they want to and are able to, but also where they'll be supported in

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their growth and development as humans and in their own healing as far as they wish" (Cook, 1999).

Dr. Lad's goal is simply to teach Ayurveda in the purest way he can while integrating it into Western medical models and healing traditions. Because of who he is, and the nature of Ayurveda itself -- a system of healing that involves a great deal of self-inquiry), students are generally affected on all the levels: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, once they embark on studies. The goal of the Ayurvedic studies program is the same as that of the Ayurvedic clinical model: integration of all aspects of the personality with the goal of obtaining good physical health, happiness, and self-awareness (Cook, 1999).

According to Barbara Cook, the Institute's registrar, "Our goal is to make Ayurveda available as a healing system to the West. This sounds like a future goal, but it is also a daily goal. What we set out to do in the present day today doesn't seem to be separate from what unfolds in the future"

Interpretation

Analysis and synthesis of the program of study has lead to a model that describes the process students follow to reach the goal of making Ayurveda a way of life. This means that the student must become totally immersed in the subject and related subject areas of Ayurveda and must live their lives in a manner consistent with the tenets of Ayurvedic medicine.

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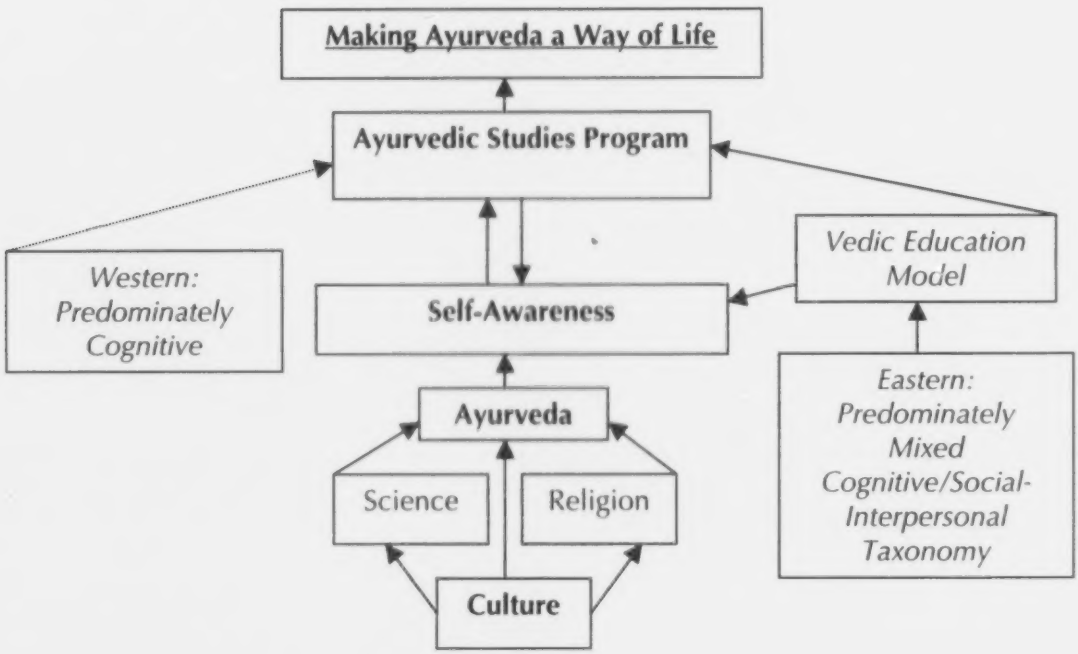

Figure 1. This figure represents the external and internal forces for attaining the goal of the Ayurvedic Studies Program and the main components of the student's goal-seeking process.

The Ayurvedic Institute is aware that most Western students have been taught predominantly via the cognitive educational model. In an attempt to ease the student into becoming a better student of Ayurveda, the program recognizes this and loosely incorporates it into this first-year program.

However, the ultimate goal of the program is to make Ayurveda a way of life for its students, and in doing this, the processes of the Vedic educational model must be heavily relied upon. This would clearly make the goal of the program a transformational one.

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At the center of the program is self-awareness. Culture, religion, and science are all predominant components of Ayurveda and when combined in a program of study can create a sense of self-awareness for the student. The Ayurvedic studies program is taught in the traditional Vedic educational model that is heavily based in the social-interpersonal educational taxonomy. Within this taxonomy, increasing self-awareness, socialization utilizing universal truths within the context of holistic and naturapathic medicine, and other altruistic examples such as stories from sacred Hindu texts present the ideology in which Ayurveda is based.

Students who enroll in this program may be searching for personal self-awareness and an understanding of humanity and its relation to the self through holistic medicine. After reaching a higher level of self-awareness, only then can the student successfully advise patients Ayurvedically in both an educational and social context. The clinical context of treatment consists of diagnosis of illness, administration of herbal therapy, and creation of wellness programs for patients that combine proper diet and exercise. Socially, Ayurveda goes many steps beyond traditional forms of Western allopathic medicine by incorporating cultural and religious-based belief systems with the patient's physical and spiritual wellness in mind.

Because this model attempts to explain the elements involved in Ayurveda itself, a delineation has been made between religion and science for the Western student. The Vedic educational model relies heavily upon the close combination of religion and science and its components are an integral part of Ayurveda. However, the cultural influence on Ayurveda must be identified because culture is the underlying influence of

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religion and science and directly influences Ayurveda. Therefore, religion and science directly influence Ayurveda. All three, however, are directly influenced by culture.

The dashed line in figure one represents a loose interaction whereas the continuous lines represent a strong connection between subjects. For instance, culture is related to the scientific and religious components that lead to Ayurveda, yet they individually are direct forces on Ayurveda. The three forces work together to support Ayurveda and its relationship to understanding the self.

The Ayurvedic studies program draws loosely from the Western cognitive educational taxonomy but most heavily from the Vedic model and Ayurveda itself. These forces combine to promote and even help create self-awareness and the knowledge base needed to make Ayurveda a way of life and are indicated in figure one by directional continuous lines.

Experiences and Goals

During another correspondence with Barbara Cook (1999), the program registrar, I asked how experiences are provided to the students in the program. She mentioned that due to the limitations on Ayurveda in the US (namely that it is simply not recognized at all and therefore no scope of practice exists even for physicians trained in India) consultations are educational only and not medical. Students are allowed to observe these interactions but not allowed to do clinical examination.

In India, Ayurveda is passed on from generation to generation from parent to child or from teacher to student. In this model, the student is expected to spend as much time as the teacher lets him or her spend observing, assisting, and listening while

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the teacher goes about the daily business of seeing patients, creating herbal formulas, etc. The student experiences what the teacher experiences on a day to day basis, and this is the education. It is a lengthy method of learning and can start when the student is still a child. This is considered the most effective way for an aspiring physician to learn. Due to cultural, religious and medical tradition in the west, this form of apprenticeship is often impossible. Since the Institute can not present this model of learning to its students, and since Ayurveda is not recognized as legal medicine in the United States, medical Ayurveda is not emphasized. The students' experiences are somewhat limited to theoretical discussions and their own creative experimentation with Ayurevdic concepts in their daily lives. This experimentation is well supported by the very strong foundation in theory that is provided them (Cook, 1999).

Students are required to take Yoga classes twice a week and this often proves to be an amazing way of learning about the body experientially. From the first day of class, students are also required to start learning Sanskrit. One of the ways that Ayurvedic knowledge (and any Vedic knowledge) has always been given is through the listening to and chanting of Sanskrit verses called sutras. This form of rote memorization factors into the cognitive taxonomy of learning. Sutras are little lines or verses of poetry which incorporate meter and melody and are easily memorized. They present big nebulous concepts in a brief poetic verse which is constructed in such a way that it inspires profound understanding of something that cannot easily be explained in common prose. The students' learning and chanting of these verses gives them much

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experiential knowledge on many levels, including the experience of how Ayurveda has been taught throughout the ages (Cook, 1999).

Students are also provided access to people in fields related to Ayurveda. They are invited to take an herb walk each year with a herbalist who has had many years's of experience in Ayurevdic and Western herbs. Bodyworkers and polarity therapists who have studied Ayurveda and use it in their philosophies of practice provide seminars for students in the program. Students also have access to a library of rare (and not so rare) texts on Ayurveda and many other disciplines. These experiences in conjunction with classroom study and interaction with other students aids each one in reaching the goal of making Ayurveda a way of life (Cook, 1999).

Program Effectiveness

Since Ayurveda is not a regulated form of clinical medicine in the United States, little to no criteria and standards are used to determine program effectiveness. This is directly related to assessment and evaluation in that no accrediting body requires Ayurvedic programs to follow certain rules that would make it a viable program of study. Therefore, the Institute relies on a blend of statistical and informal internal assessment. Faculty and staff judge the program's effectiveness by how well the students do on their final oral exams, how interested they are in continuing their education in the advanced programs or weekend seminars, and whether many of them become interested in working for the Institute.

The various types of data used to determine program's effectiveness "comes from the numbers (students' grades, the drop-out rate, number of students receiving a

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certificate of completion, the number of students wanting to continue, etc.) and much of what we know comes from the combined effect that all our interactions with the students has had on us throughout the year" (Cook, 1999). These combined assessments form a blend of approximately 50% quantitative and 50% qualitative program analysis.

Results and Conclusion

Attempts to contact other faculty or students in the program were unsuccessful therefore, triangulation of the information presented by the registrar was not possible. However, I did not find any contradictions in information presented in the program catalog with that of Ms. Cook's. Correspondence with Ms. Cook allowed me to draw the conclusion that the Institute is successful in reaching *its* goal with students who *want* to reach the goal of making Ayurveda a way of life. Students who demonstrate not only to the Institute but also to themselves making Ayurveda a way of life fulfill both a personal and institutional goal. However, students who do not fulfill this goal may in fact achieve many other personal goals such as self-awareness, esoteric cultural and religious Hindu knowledge, and simply a different method of learning via the Vedic educational model.

The combination of taking the student's previous methods of learning and combining them with the Vedic educational model is a great strength of this program. Praxis is the practice of an art or science as discerned from theoretical knowledge. The Ayurvedic Institute's program in Ayurvedic Studies takes this approach to place theory into practice. By doing this, the program should have great success by attempting to

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create lifelong learners in a field of study where making a lifestyle change is the main goal.

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